

## ABSTRACT

An online direct marketing system is presented in which advertisers have an opportunity to send targeted promotions, coupons and offers that are placed in a user's web-based email account without the drawbacks sending conventional email. The advertiser transmits promotion content and targeting information to the system wherein the promotions will be placed in a separate folder within user's web-based mail account. The promotions does not take up disk quota space and at the same time, the system does not divulge private user information to the advertiser. This invention also includes a dynamic previewing system to allow recipients to easily preview promotional offers.

This system provides a means to free web-based email providers from the need to obtain opt-in permission to send offers to their users as providers are frequently prohibited from sharing the user's email address and personal information with merchants. Also this system helps aggregate promotions for smaller web-based email providers or ISPs who are not big enough individually to attract large promoters to send direct marketing offers to their system.

This system can either reside within a web-based email provider's system or be delivered over a network to multiple web-based email providers.

The invention also applies to online direct mark

The present invention relates to the processing of E-mail messages over a telecommunications network. More specifically, the present invention relates to the enhancement of e-mail technology to provide a preview mechanism whereby senders of e-mail are able to provide special customized graphical messages in addition to the e-mail content. The additional graphical messages can be viewed by the recipients prior to opening the body of the message itself. The technology applies particularly to web-based e-mail systems, but a modified version can be adapted to pop-based and proprietary e-mail systems.

The present invention allows a method to view special preview enhanced e-mail messages. The invention helps vendors to provide an alternative method to entice recipients to open the e-mail by providing a graphical introduction to the content of the e-mail other than the text-based subject line of the e-mail. The invention provides an efficient viewing mechanism to view the previews without cluttering the listing of the e-mails in a recipients e-mail inbox.eting to consumers through web sites as well

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The present invention relates to the enhancement of E-mail user interfaces and message formats. Specifically, the present invention relates to the enhancement of e-mail technology to add a mechanism to attach a text or graphical "teaser" to an email whereby the recipient may

obtain more information about a specific email without going through the trouble of opening an email message. In addition, in cases where there is no "teaser" attached to an email, the invention enhances the e-mail client whereby an efficient method to preview and manage messages is presented. The invention provides an efficient viewing mechanism to view the teasers and previews without cluttering the listing of the e-mails in a recipients e-mail inbox.

The technology applies both to pop-based (standalone application) and web-based (html) e-mail systems. The invention also presents a method whereby new user interfaces may be enhanced onto an existing e-mail reader/client.

An online direct marketing and advertising system is presented in which advertisers have an opportunity to send targeted promotions, coupons and offers that are placed in a user's web-based email account without the drawbacks sending conventional email. The advertiser transmits promotion content and targeting information to the system wherein the promotions will be placed in a separate folder or a special "offer box" within user's web-based mail account. The promotions does not take up disk quota space and at the same time, the system does not need to divulge private user information to the advertiser. This invention also includes a dynamic graphical previewing system to allow recipients to easily preview promotional offers.

This system provides a means to free web-based email providers from the need to obtain opt-in permission to send offers to their users as providers are frequently prohibited from sharing the user's email address and personal information with merchants. Also this system helps aggregate promotions for smaller web-based email providers and ISPs who are not big enough individually to attract large promoters to send direct marketing offers to their system.

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The invention also applies to sending offers to consumers through other kinds of registration based web sites as well, such as portals.